The Church of England *c.*1689 – *c.*1833

From Toleration to Tractarianism

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

First published 1993

Printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

The Church of England *c.* 1689 – *c.* 1833: from toleration to Tractarianism / edited by John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor.
p. cm.
ISBN 0 521 41732 5 (hard)
1. Church of England – History – 18th century. 2. Anglican Communion – England – History – 18th century. 3. England – Church history – 18th century. I. Walsh, John, 1927– . II. Haydon, Colin, 1955– . III. Taylor, Stephen, 1960– .
BX5088.C48 1993
283'.42'09033—dc20 92-42707 CIP

ISBN 0 521 41732 5 hardback

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1 Introduction: the Church and Anglicanism in the 'long' eighteenth century

John Walsh and Stephen Taylor

Despite some valuable recent studies, most notably Jonathan Clark's influential *English Society 1688–1832* (1985),[1] the history of the eighteenth-century Church of England has long been neglected. In 1860 Mark Pattison wrote that 'the genuine Anglican omits that period from the history of the Church altogether. In constructing his *Catena Patrum* he closes his list with Waterland or Brett, and leaps at once to 1833, when the *Tracts for the Times* commenced – as Charles II dated his reign from his father's death.'[2] The same holds good for church history in many university and college syllabuses today, in which the eighteenth century is quietly omitted.

Since Victorian times the historiography of the eighteenth-century Church has often had a strongly judgemental slant. High Churchmen who revered the Caroline divines have found it hard to forgive the expulsion of the Nonjurors, 'the candlestick of the Church'; Evangelicals have censured it for its rejection of the Methodist movement of Wesley and Whitefield. Victorian Churchmen saw it as an era of decline, a period 'of lethargy instead of activity, of worldliness instead of spirituality, of self-seeking instead of self-denial, of grossness instead of refinement'.[3] This was the case not only with clerical partisans but even with the most accomplished and fair-minded of church historians: the tone of Abbey and Overton's Victorian classic, *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, was gloomy. They held that the state of the Church at Anne's accession in 1702 was flourishing and that the green shoots of revival were visible by 1800, but in the decades which lay between 'the Church partook of the general sordidness of the age; it was an age of great material prosperity, but of moral and spiritual poverty, such as hardly finds a parallel in our history'.[4] The violent party battles which gave rise to 'the Sacheverell "phrensy"' and the bitter

[1] See also the important debates in *PP*, 115 and 117 (1987), and *Albion*, 21, 3 (1989).

[2] M. Pattison, 'Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688–1750', in *Essays*, ed. H. Nettleship (2 vols., Oxford, 1889), II, 43.

[3] J. H. Overton and F. Relton, *The English Church from the Accession of George I to the End of the Eighteenth Century (1714–1800)* (1906), p. 1.

[4] C. J. Abbey and J. H. Overton, *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century* (2 vols., 1878), II, 4.

Bangorian controversy were replaced under George I by 'spiritual lethargy', a 'sluggish calm'. From time to time Abbey and Overton attempted to qualify their depressing picture. They conceded that the eighteenth-century Church produced extremely able defenders of the faith – men of the calibre of Law, Butler and Berkeley. They shifted some of the blame for the low standards of clerical behaviour on to the corrupting influences of secular society in the age of Walpole. They derived some consolation from the comforting conviction that, if things were bad in the English Church, they were even worse in Catholic France.[5]

It was not until the appearance of Norman Sykes's *Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century* in 1934 – a landmark in Anglican historiography – that the reputation of the eighteenth-century Church began to be seriously rehabilitated. Sykes's tone was one of qualified approval. He insisted that the Georgian Church should not be judged by anachronistic nineteenth-century standards. Many of its alleged abuses were age-old problems. The pluralism and non-residence which so many critics adduced were familiar in the middle ages and, indeed, among the Caroline clergy so admired by the Tractarians: Lancelot Andrewes was a pluralist on a grand scale, as was the devout Sancroft. If Hanoverian prelates were regularly absent from their sees for part of the year while attending Parliament, so too were medieval bishops, dragged away for protracted periods of service in the royal household. Moreover, Hanoverian Churchmen had to face new and unprecedented difficulties. In the post-Revolutionary world they had to learn to live with the pastoral problems caused by religious toleration and, later in the century, with those of increasing urbanization and industrialization. As an overall judgement on the eighteenth-century clergy, Sykes cited with approval the verdict of Ollard and Walker on those of the diocese of York in 1743: 'a body of dutiful and conscientious men, trying to do their work according to the standards of their day'.[6]

The analytical force and descriptive detail of Sykes's *Church and State* have ensured that it still remains the starting-point for anyone interested in the condition of the Hanoverian Church. Its conclusions, however, have not commanded universal acceptance and the debate between optimists and pessimists has continued to dominate the writings of historians. Judgements identical to those of the nineteenth century can be found today in simple-minded denominational histories. Highly pejorative verdicts are still visible in the work of sophisticated secular historians. In the tone of J. H. Plumb we can detect the detached, Enlightenment irony of a latter-day

[5] Ibid., I, 29, 2–3; II, 54. [6] Quoted Sykes, *Church and State*, p. 6.

Gibbon, as he talks of the 'worldliness, almost ... venality' of eighteenth-century prelates and of parish clergy so underemployed that 'time hung heavily on their hands'.[7] Historians further to the left see the Church as a central part of 'Old Corruption', parasitic on the labour and wealth of the working community – an angle of attack which carries on the tradition of early nineteenth-century radicals such as Cobbett, or John Wade in his *Extraordinary Black Book*. A similar judgement informs Roy Porter's damning conclusion that 'the year 1800 dawned with the Anglican Church ill-equipped to serve the nation ... But who missed it?'[8] Among specialist church historians roseate views of the eighteenth-century Church have by no means swept the field. Both favourable and adverse verdicts are still being delivered. Against the cautious optimism of Jeremy Gregory in his essay, 'The eighteenth-century Reformation' (below), must be set the cautious pessimism of Peter Virgin's important recent book, *The Church in an Age of Negligence*, which criticizes the established Church for a repeated failure to reform itself until forced to do so in the 1830s.[9]

In some respects, therefore, the debate about the Georgian Church has moved on little since the 1930s. The arguments of optimists and pessimists have a judgemental character that would be familiar to Sykes. Nonetheless, this debate has been highly productive, in that we now know much more about the condition of the Georgian Church. Where Sykes relied on memoirs, we now have figures. The last twenty-five years in particular have witnessed a proliferation of local studies of church life at every level, from the diocese to the deanery, from the county to the city. Some have concentrated on a single episcopate; others have looked at continuity and change through the whole century. A striking omission in all this work has been the capital. This has been partly remedied by Viviane Barrie-Curien's contribution to this volume and her new book:[10] her essay here exemplifies both the evidential basis and the conclusions of much recent work. The records of Queen Anne's Bounty, of visitation returns, of Parliamentary inquiries and of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have all been scrutinized. As a result a considerable corpus of hard, quantified evidence is now available for many parts of the country on the wealth of the clergy, the frequency of church services, pluralism, non-residence, church building, the activities of the bishops and proceedings in the ecclesiastical courts. What, then, do we know?

[7] J. H. Plumb, *England in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1950), pp. 43–4.
[8] R. Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1982), p. 191.
[9] P. Virgin, *The Church in an Age of Negligence 1700–1840* (Cambridge, 1989).
[10] V. Barrie-Curien, *Clergé et pastorale en Angleterre au XVIIIe siècle. Le diocèse de Londres* (Paris, 1992).

The state of the Church

At the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy stood the twenty-seven English and Welsh bishops. Even if we exclude the bishop of Sodor and Man, who had no seat in the House of Lords and whose diocese consisted of only seventeen parishes, there were marked differences between them, in both duties and emoluments. Their dioceses varied considerably in size, from Rochester, with fewer than 150 parishes, to Lincoln, with over 1,500. In 1762 the archbishop of Canterbury was receiving £7,000 per annum, the bishop of Lincoln £1,500 and the bishop of Bristol only £450. Sykes's verdict on these men, the governors of the clergy, as deserving 'a greater proportion of credit than of censure', has failed to command widespread assent.[11] Eighteenth-century bishops are commonly presented as undeserving younger sons of the aristocracy or political hacks, neglectful of their pastoral responsibilities. There is certainly no doubt that the episcopate was an increasingly aristocratic body. The fathers of over one fifth of the bishops appointed by George III were peers or close relatives of peers; none of Anne's creations fall into this category.[12] But the episcopal bench rarely provided sinecure posts for the well connected, despite George Grenville's statement that there was a group of 'bishoprics of ease for men of family and fashion'. On the contrary, the aristocrats included men of significant pastoral zeal and energy, including James Beauclerk and Robert Drummond.[13] And the Church remained a career open to the talent of the humbly born, as the careers of Potter, Gibson, Warburton and Hurd proved. As far as politics is concerned, it was as difficult for eighteenth-century bishops to balance the duties of 'prelate' and 'pastor' as it had been for their predecessors. In some respects it was more difficult, as annual Parliamentary sessions, the norm after the Revolution, increased the demands made on bishops and kept many of them in London for a considerable time each year. It must be recognized, however, that they were not merely ministerial voting fodder, but the representatives in Parliament of both Church and clergy, a role doubly important in the absence of a sitting Convocation after 1717. On occasions, and especially during debates concerning the Church or religion, they demonstrated a striking degree of independence. Moreover, there is considerable evidence that they were

[11] Sykes, *Church and State*, p. 187.

[12] N. Ravitch, *Sword and Mitre. Government and Episcopate in France and England in the Age of Aristocracy* (The Hague, 1966), p. 120.

[13] Quoted Sykes, *Church and State*, p. 157. For Beauclerk see W. Marshall, 'Episcopal Activity in the Hereford and Oxford Dioceses, 1660–1760', *Midland History*, 8 (1983), 106–20. For Drummond see S. Taylor, 'Church and State in England in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: The Newcastle Years 1742–62', PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1987, p. 128.

competent administrators, who discharged diligently the episcopal tasks of visitation, confirmation and ordination. In 1718 Archbishop Wake wrote that 'the confirmations had never been so regular throughout this kingdom as within the last thirty years, nor the episcopal visitations and that by the bishops in person, so constant'.[14] In general, visitations, usually combined with confirmations, occurred every three or four years. Bishops turned visitations into more effective tools of pastoral oversight and tried to make confirmation more orderly, and thus more spiritually edifying. Even Benjamin Hoadly and Lancelot Blackburne, whose careers are so often used to illustrate the 'notorious' failings of the episcopate, are revealed to have been diligent, if not outstanding, Churchmen.

With the bishops absent in London for at least part of the year, much depended on the effectiveness of the diocesan administration, and especially the archdeacons. Examples of good and bad archdeacons are easy to find, but the history of diocesan administration in the Georgian Church remains to be written, as does that of the cathedral chapters.[15] Only one aspect of the administrative structure has received even limited attention: the ecclesiastical courts. Here too, much work remains to be done, but it is possible to provide an outline sketch. The church courts continued to have an important role in hearing testamentary and marriage cases throughout the century, but their disciplinary power had been in decline since the Reformation. They were revived at the Restoration along with the rest of the structure of the established Church, though they appear to have found increasing problems in securing compliance, and it has often been assumed that their disciplinary power was finally broken by the Revolution. Indeed, while anti-clerical Whigs continued to condemn the courts as a relic of popery, the weakness of church discipline in the eighteenth century was generally recognized and deplored by the clergy, and sneered at by the Dissenters. The Isle of Man under Bishop Thomas Wilson, though praised as a model by High Churchmen, is widely seen as an exception: not many diocesans would have sanctioned the punishment meted out by his correction court to a fallen woman in 1715 – 'to be dragged from a boat on such a day as the vicar will appoint'.[16] But recent research suggests that the picture of decay must be qualified. The diocese of Ely, where the courts appear to have collapsed within two decades of the Revolution, may well have been untypical. The ability of the ecclesiastical courts to enforce attendance at church was undoubtedly undermined by James II's Declarations of

[14] Quoted Sykes, *Church and State*, p. 120.

[15] But see J. Shuler, 'The Pastoral and Ecclesiastical Administration of the Diocese of Durham 1721–71', PhD dissertation, University of Durham, 1975, esp. chs. 3 and 4, and the forthcoming histories of Lincoln and Canterbury Cathedrals.

[16] Quoted M. Kinnear, 'The Correction Court in the Diocese of Carlisle, 1704–56', *Church History*, 59 (1990), 205.

Indulgence and by the Toleration Act. In the diocese of Hereford presentments for non-attendance were almost unknown after 1687. Elsewhere they were rare, although in Oxford they formed an important element in the courts' business until the 1730s. However, in many areas the courts continued to act as guardians of the nation's morality, kept alive not only by clerical zeal from above, but also by pressure from within the community itself. From the standpoint of the early nineteenth century decay is undeniable, but the chronology is different for each diocese. In the diocese of Carlisle the courts heard an increasing number of cases through the early eighteenth century, and were most active in the later 1730s, before declining. Jan Albers shows that the deanery courts in Lancashire were prosecuting sexual offences more vigorously, and more effectively, in the mid-eighteenth century than earlier; the number of cases peaked in north Lancashire in the 1770s, though it declined rapidly in the industrializing south of the county a little before that, and entered into a precipitate decline in the last two decades of the century. Individuals could still be found performing public penance in the mid-nineteenth century. The pertinacity of the church courts through the eighteenth century may say something about the resilience of the Church's administrative system; it certainly offers evidence of continued respect for the policing authority of the Church and its role as a focus for community values.[17]

The greatest advance since Sykes has come in our knowledge of the lower clergy, Addison's 'clerical subalterns'. Simple generalizations are impossible – the rector of Stanhope, County Durham, a living worth more than many bishoprics, had little in common with an impoverished Welsh curate. The records of Queen Anne's Bounty have ensured that we know much more about poorer benefices than richer ones. In 1736, 5,638 were classified as poor, that is, worth £50 per annum or under. In some respects the picture was bleaker than this statistic might suggest; almost 20 per cent of these were worth less than £10 and neither of these figures reflects the plight of the unbeneficed curates. Regional variations were marked, the north and the west in general containing more poor livings than the south and east – 18 per cent of Winchester benefices were poor compared with 79 per cent in Llandaff.[18] Overall, incomes increased dramatically in the course of the

[17] M. Cross, 'The Church and Local Society in the Diocese of Ely, *c.*1630–*c.*1730', PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1991, pp. 302–3; W. M. Marshall, 'The Administration of the Dioceses of Hereford and Oxford 1660–1760', PhD dissertation, University of Bristol, 1978, pp. 78–9; Kinnear, 'Correction Court', pp. 191–206; J. Albers, 'Seeds of Contention: Society, Politics and the Church of England in Lancashire, 1689–1790', PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1988, 222–7; O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (2 vols., 1966–70), I, 487; P. Rycroft, 'Church, Chapel and Community in Craven, 1764–1851', DPhil dissertation, University of Oxford, 1988, pp. 133–4.

[18] Durham and Norwich were exceptions. I. Green, 'The First Five Years of Queen Anne's Bounty', in *Princes and Paupers in the English Church 1500–1800*, ed. R. O'Day and F. Heal (Leicester, 1981), pp. 231–54; Taylor, 'Church and State', p. 39.

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, helped by the general rise in incomes from the land and by favourable tithe commutation during enclosure. Surprisingly, perhaps, it was the poorest clergy who benefited most from this process.[19] By the early nineteenth century only one third of livings fell below the clerical poverty line, now estimated at £150, compared with half in 1736. As Virgin points out, however, pluralism and private wealth meant that clerical incomes were often significantly higher than benefice incomes. Even so, 'extravagantly wealthy incumbents were few and far between'. Only seventy-six English and Welsh clergy received over £2,000 a year from ecclesiastical sources. In England the typical income was £275 per annum; in Wales only £172.[20]

The growing wealth of the clergy was probably accompanied by a rise in their social status. From the beginning of the eighteenth century the great majority were university educated, a fact which set even the poorest of them apart from their parishioners. But the eighteenth century witnessed their growing integration into local landed society. Tithe commutation at enclosure made more of them substantial landowners and from the 1740s clerical JPs were increasingly common. While the Church drew a high proportion of its clergy from clerical families throughout the eighteenth century, the regional studies of Paul Langford and Viviane Barrie-Curien have shown that the latter part of the century in particular saw an increase in recruitment from gentry families. Nonetheless, some caution must be expressed about the gentrification of the clergy. Overall, it seems unlikely that more than 20 per cent of clergymen came from the landed gentry in the late Georgian period, though the figure was significantly higher in the richer parts of England, and Langford has recently suggested that 'the trend towards a body of clergy whose background and upbringing were in essence those of laymen, seems to have been peculiarly a late eighteenth-century one'.[21]

What provision did the clergy make for public worship? This question, above all, has been used in recent research to assess the vitality of the Hanoverian Church. Three areas of church life have received particular attention – pluralism and non-residence by the clergy; the maintenance and building of churches; and the frequency of services. Here a considerable amount of evidence has been accumulated which allows us to reassess some common generalizations about the eighteenth-century Church.

One of the greatest failings of the Georgian Church is often seen as its inability to attain its self-imposed objective of a resident minister in every

[19] Virgin, *Age of Negligence*, p. 73.
[20] Ibid., p. 90; Green, 'Queen Anne's Bounty', p. 249.
[21] Virgin, *Age of Negligence*, pp. 94, 110; P. Langford, 'The English Clergy and the American Revolution', in *The Transformation of Political Culture*, ed. E. Hellmuth (Oxford, 1990), p. 304n; ch. 3 below.

parish in England and Wales who maintained the standard of double-duty; that is, of two services each Sunday. The non-residence of the clergy was a complaint frequently levelled against the Church of England by reformers before the Reformation and in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I, but the situation in the Georgian age was worse than in earlier periods. Immediately before the Reformation about three-quarters of all parishes were in the hands of resident incumbents; by the 1820s this had fallen to four out of every ten.[22] Moreover, the eighteenth century had witnessed not improvement, but deterioration. In Devon the proportion of non-residents rose from 34 per cent in 1744 to 41 per cent in 1779. In the diocese of Oxford 51 per cent of incumbents had been resident at the time of Thomas Secker's primary visitation in 1738, but only 39 per cent were forty years later.[23] There was, however, considerable regional variation. The dioceses of the north and west appear to have been less badly affected than those of the south and east. And within dioceses there was a contrast between town and country. The larger towns, in particular, were often well supplied with clergy, and London was so well endowed with preacherships that the vast majority of its parishes were served by two or more ministers.[24]

At first sight the figures for non-residence do much to support the claim that the parochial system was severely weakened in the eighteenth century, in a way which undermined the monopolistic claims of the Church of England and its influence in the localities. Alan Gilbert has calculated, on the basis of the Parliamentary returns of 1810, that over 1,000 parishes were 'simply unattended by ministers of the Established Church'.[25] But, as Mark Smith's essay on Saddleworth reveals, a non-resident incumbent was not necessarily incompatible with a high standard of pastoral care. Indeed, various strategies were available for dealing with non-residence and at a local level there is remarkably little evidence of total neglect. In 33 out of 100 cases of non-residence in the diocese of Oxford in 1778, for example, the incumbent lived nearby and performed the duty himself, a resident stipendiary curate was employed in 27 parishes, and the remaining 40 were served by neighbouring clergy.[26]

Reasons for non-residence were varied. Ill-health and the absence of a parsonage are among the most obvious. But the single most important cause of non-residence was pluralism – in 1705, 16 per cent of the beneficed clergy were pluralists, but by 1775, 36 per cent were.[27] Some contemporar-

[22] P. Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (1969), p. 57; Virgin, *Age of Negligence*, p. 200.

[23] A. Warne, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century Devon* (Newton Abbot, 1969), pp. 39–40; Marshall, 'Administration of Hereford and Oxford', p. 105; D. McClatchey, *Oxfordshire Clergy 1777–1869* (Oxford, 1960), p. 31.

[24] In 1812. See p. 105 below.

[25] A. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England* (1976), pp. 6–7.

[26] McClatchey, *Oxfordshire Clergy*, pp. 31–3.

[27] Virgin, *Age of Negligence*, pp. 192–3. These figures may admit of some qualification and refinement, but the basic trend is clear.

ies claimed, with plausibility, that pluralism was necessitated by clerical poverty. Of fifteen pluralists in Northumberland in 1721 only four had a lucrative salary, and only two of these held parochial livings in plurality. But this argument must be qualified. The poor Welsh clergy were no more pluralistic than the richer English. Indeed, pluralism was sometimes least widely practised where it could have been most easily justified – it was remarkably infrequent among the starveling hill clergy of the Lake District, for example. The reasons for the increase in pluralism, however, are obscure. Poverty is hard to adduce as an explanation here – the clergy were, after all, getting wealthier. Moreover, it has generally been assumed that the Georgian Church was overstocked with clergy. But Peter Virgin has recently pointed to a decline in the number of ordinands in the eighteenth century, a trend which raises the intriguing possibility that a failure to recruit may have been partly responsible for the increase in pluralism.[28]

Pluralism was an open invitation to Dissenters and anti-clericals to attack the Church, but Churchmen could be equally vehement in their criticisms of the practice and their failure to reform the abuse was not due merely to lethargy and weakness of will. The hierarchy, however, often stood condemned by its own actions. In the cases of the patronage dispensed by both the bishops of Ely and the deans and chapter of Durham, pluralism appears mostly to have made wealthy clergymen more comfortable.[29] And, while the poverty of the see of Bristol may have justified Bishop Butler in holding the deanery of St Paul's as a commendam, there was surely no justification for James Cornwallis to enjoy the revenue of both the bishopric of Lichfield and the deanery of Durham for almost thirty years. The Church's failure to reform what it recognized as an evil must be admitted. On the other hand, the impact of pluralism and non-residence on standards of pastoral care should not be exaggerated.

Another frequent criticism of the eighteenth-century Church is that it failed to take adequate care of its places of worship. Visitations certainly revealed many examples of the neglect of church fabrics. Secker's charge to the clergy of Oxford in 1750 complained that 'too frequently the floors are meanly paved, or the walls dirty or patched, or the windows ill glazed, and it may be stopt up, or the roof not ceiled'.[30] Local records suggest, however, that these problems were less a result of the failure of rectors and churchwardens to act, than of the continual struggle necessary to keep medieval fabrics in decent repair. More seriously, the Georgian Church has been charged with failing to build new churches to accommodate the rising population. Even Sykes was unimpressed by its record in this respect,

[28] Shuler, 'Diocese of Durham', p. 27; Virgin, *Age of Negligence*, pp. 202, 288, 136.

[29] R. Mitchison, 'Pluralities and the Poorer Benefices in Eighteenth-Century England', *HJ*, 5 (1962), 188–90; W. B. Maynard, 'Pluralism and Non-Residence in the Archdeaconry of Durham, 1774–1856', *Northern History*, 26 (1990), 103–30.

[30] *The Works of Thomas Secker* (new edn, 6 vols., 1811), V, 395.

stating categorically that 'the Hanoverian age was not a period of church-building'.[31] Recent research is proving him wrong. The seating capacity of hundreds of churches was increased by the erection of galleries. More significantly, Basil Clarke has listed 224 churches which were either built or rebuilt by individual benefactions between 1700 and 1800. At the end of the eighteenth century in Lancashire almost three-quarters of the churches were either new or at least larger than they had been 100 years earlier. In Saddleworth five new chapels were built between 1743 and 1788, and, even more remarkably, the period between 1700 and 1790 saw an increase in the proportion of the local population which could be accommodated in church.[32]

A more telling criticism of eighteenth-century church building is its absence where it was most needed. Even in London, where money was voted by Parliament in 1711 for fifty new churches, the Commissioners decided not to provide as many cheap, functional buildings as possible, but to create architectural glories, 'monuments to her [Queen Anne's] piety & grandure'. In the end only ten were erected.[33] Outside London the Church was entirely dependent on local efforts; there was no state aid for church building until the Church Buildings Act of 1818. Individual benefactions by the wealthy were not unknown, but for the most part the Church was dependent on the commitment and money of the middling sort. New churches were least likely to be built in the working-class districts of the industrializing towns. But there were exceptions. In some industrial villages church building was the product of communal labour, as humble parishioners got to work with spade and trowel. The eleven churches rebuilt or substantially restored between 1748 and 1825 in the deanery of Craven were cheerfully paid for by rate.[34] Indeed, given that the Church's administrative structures were essentially medieval, overall it seems to have coped well with the demands of a growing population, especially, perhaps, in the industrializing north, until it was swamped by the dramatic urban expansion of the 1790s and beyond. If bricks, mortar and plasterwork can be adduced as proof of religious zeal, the Georgian Church compares remarkably favourably with that of the Tudor period or the seventeenth century.

More important than the provision of churches was the frequency of services within them. The form of public worship in the eighteenth-century Church was more or less uniform throughout England and Wales. The

[31] Sykes, *Church and State*, p. 232.

[32] B. F. L. Clarke, *The Building of the Eighteenth-Century Church* (1963), pp. 50–89; Albers, 'Seeds of Contention', pp. 48–56. For Saddleworth see ch. 4 below.

[33] E. de Waal, 'New Churches in East London in the Early Eighteenth Century', *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 9 (1965), 98–114. The phrase is Vanbrugh's.

[34] Rycroft, 'Craven', pp. 103, 134; M. Smith, 'Religion in Industrial Society. The Case of Oldham and Saddleworth, 1780–1865', DPhil dissertation, University of Oxford, 1987, p. 63.

morning service on Sundays consisted of matins, ante-communion, that is, the communion service to the end of the prayer for the Church, and a sermon. Evening prayer was said in the afternoons, usually without a sermon if one had been preached in the morning, though sometimes the catechism was expounded. On those Sundays and festivals when communion was celebrated, non-communicants generally left after the ante-communion and the ideal envisaged was that those receiving the sacrament should move into the chancel for the rest of the service. Some ministers omitted the Athanasian Creed, variations occurred in vestments and ritual, and in Wales services were often conducted in Welsh, but the striking differences in liturgy and practice that have been a feature of Anglican worship since the later nineteenth century were absent.

Generalization about the regularity of services is much more difficult. The most striking feature of the fragmentary evidence available is that there was great regional diversity. The ideal performance of 'double-duty' – both matins and evensong – on Sundays was more common in the 'highland' north and Wales than in the lowlands of the south and east, surprisingly, perhaps, in view of the Church's alleged failure in those areas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A similar pattern emerges when we look at the frequency of communion services. Very few parish churches fell below the canonical minimum of three celebrations a year. Sykes suggested that the normal practice was four, at the three great festivals and around Michaelmas.[35] His statement is supported by the evidence of the dioceses of Oxford and Worcester, but in Wales monthly communion was the norm. Less surprisingly, services appear to have been more frequent in the towns than in the countryside. Almost all churches in the towns of Essex and Hertfordshire had two Sunday services at the time of the 1778 visitation, and nearly half of them also had monthly communion.[36] Generalizations about eighteenth-century public worship are further complicated when we ask whether the situation was improving or deteriorating. In the dioceses of London and Oxford the proportion of parishes offering 'double-duty' declined in the course of the century. In Devon a decline in the number of parishes offering week-day prayers was accompanied, curiously, by an increase in the frequency of communion. In the Wirral, on the other hand, the century saw an increase in the frequency of all forms of public worship.[37]

[35] Sykes, *Church and State*, p. 250.

[36] See F. Mather's seminal article, 'Georgian Churchmanship Reconsidered: Some Variations in Anglican Public Worship 1714–1830', *JEH*, 36 (1985), 255–83, and Taylor, 'Church and State', pp. 30–3, for further analysis of the evidence.

[37] Ch. 3 below; Marshall, 'Administration of Hereford and Oxford', p. 112; McClatchey, *Oxfordshire Clergy*, pp. 80–2; Warne, *Church and Society*, pp. 43–5; R. Pope, 'The Eighteenth-Century Church in Wirral', MA dissertation, University of Wales (Lampeter), 1971, pp. 49–56.